

Balance Maintained

Defense Secretary McNamara's announcement that the Soviets apparently are in the process of testing an orbital nuclear bomb is proper cause for a feeling of disappointment and frustration. There is, however, no justification for panic.

It is a bitter disillusionment that the Soviet government has seen fit—assuming that the United States' intelligence estimates are correct—to embark on the testing of a new weapons system. The Russians must surely have known that the tests were being observed and that the purpose would be deduced. And it is a move not calculated to improve the climate of relations between the world's two greatest powers.

But aside from the blow to those who have hopefully traced evidences of what seemed to be a detente between Russia and the United States, a Soviet-built Fractional Orbital Bombardment System would not, of itself, constitute a major

threat to world peace or to our national security.

This is not to say that an orbiting bomb would not be an awesome weapon. It would, without question, materially improve Russia's capability of destroying large, fixed targets on this continent. But it would not provide the single factor that might tempt the Soviets, at a time of high world tension, to launch a nuclear attack. It would not alter this nation's ability to retaliate with a strike that would, quite literally, incinerate every major Russian city.

The hard fact of life in the world today is that the best hope for avoiding the holocaust is the knowledge by all nuclear powers that they cannot unleash atomic destruction without being destroyed themselves. The new Soviet system would, at best, increase the ferocity of Russia's reply to thermonuclear aggression. It would not soften the consequences of an aggression by Russia.

The balance of terror remains intact.